



Homestead Farmers

Suggested Post-Visit Activity

This activity is tied into the Missouri, Illinois, and national standards for Social Studies and Language Arts.



Lesson Overview

Life could be precarious for farmers on the Great Plains during the 1800s. While many began with sufficient resources, their subsistence could be threatened by elements, such as weather, events and the economy. What sorts of steps could they take to help ensure their success?

Objectives

Students will work together to make decisions faced by farmers living on the Great Plains during the 1800s.

Description

Students work in small groups, taking on the role of a Homestead family.

“Homestead” Cards give students information about their resources.

Situation Cards give information about events each group will encounter.

Students will use information to make decisions about their future and how they will use their resources.

NATURE’S FOOD CHAIN

The nineteenth-century farmer on the Great Plains was an important part of the food production chain. To get their products to market, they depended on the efforts of many people. The farmer was, however, even more dependent on nature. The unpredictable weather of the Great Plains tested the resolve of many farmers trying to earn a living on the Great Plains.

PART I

Copy and cut out the **“Homestead” Cards** on the next page.

Copy and cut out the **Situation Cards** found on page 4. Place them in a container.

Divide students into six groups and give each group one of the **“Homestead” Cards**.

Each “Homestead” will begin with the same number of livestock: four horses, two milk cows, three pigs, and ten chickens.

Give each “Homestead” two turns at picking a situation card from the bag.

Based on the information found on their situation cards, have them adjust their livestock numbers on their **“Homestead” Card**.

PART II

Inform the students that in order to survive the next year they must have at least:

4 horses to plow the fields

1 milk cow

4 chickens for eggs

























2 pigs for food

Using the four options below, have each group assess their livestock situation and decide what action they will take. Some possible actions might include the following:

- Sell some of your animals to build a new house.
- Sell the homestead and move back to the East.
- Ask your neighbor for help with the spring plowing in return for some food.
- Make the best of your situation and hope for a better crop next year.

Using the “Numbered-Heads Approach,” have each group share its decision and the outcome of its decision.

Homestead Cards

<p>The Johnson Homestead</p> <p>2  4 </p> <p>3  10 </p>	<p>The Wilson Homestead</p> <p>2  4 </p> <p>3  10 </p>
<p>The Miller Homestead</p> <p>2  4 </p> <p>3  10 </p>	<p>The Washington Homestead</p> <p>2  4 </p> <p>3  10 </p>
<p>The Greene Homestead</p> <p>2  4 </p> <p>3  10 </p>	<p>The Weber Homestead</p> <p>2  4 </p> <p>3  10 </p>

(copy/cut)

Situation Cards

<p>Summer rains make your wheat crop grow—buy a new horse to help with the harvest.</p>	<p>A grasshopper swarm eats your garden and wheat crop—sell one milk cow and two horses to buy food for the winter.</p>	<p>No rain in August causes your corn crop to wilt—sell six chickens for winter clothes.</p>
<p>A sudden thunderstorm strikes before you get all your animals in the barn—you lose one horse.</p>	<p>A fox raids your chicken coop—lose four chickens.</p>	<p>A hailstorm destroys your wheat crop—sell two horses and two pigs to buy seed for next year.</p>
<p>In a prairie fire you lose one milk cow, two horses, two chickens, and one pig.</p>	<p>With plenty of sunshine and rain, you harvest your corn crop and buy a new horse.</p>	<p>In a tornado your barn roof blows off and you lose one horse, four chickens, and one pig.</p>
<p>An early frost kills your potatoes—sell one pig to buy potatoes for the winter.</p>	<p>In a drought your well dries up—lose four chickens, one milk cow, and two pigs.</p>	<p>Healthy soil allows you to harvest a successful wheat crop—buy one milk cow.</p>

(copy/cut)